

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6098

INFO PANCANAL

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: LOCAL ATMOSPHERE

REF: PANAMA 7543

SUMMARY: LOCAL PUBLIC TREATMENT OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS APPEARS TO HAVE ENTERED A HOLDING PATTERN OVER PAST TWO WEEKS. AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S LOS ANGELES SPEECH CONTINUED AS SUBJECT OF SEARCHING AND FAVORABLE EXAMINATION. LINOWITZ STATEMENT THAT NO TREATY WOULD BE SIGNED IN 1976 ACCORDED GENERALLY QUIET RECEPTION; PUBLIC IS EVIDENTLY BEING PREPARED TO ACCEPT THIS IDEA. GENERAL ATTITUDE GOP APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO SUSTAIN IS MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ATTENTION AND SUPPORT WITHOUT EXCITING HOPES FOR QUICK RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM. BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS, EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT LOCAL SCENE SHOULD REMAIN MANAGEABLE AT LEAST UNTIL JANUARY 9. END SUMMARY.

1. SUBSEQUENT TO REFTTEL, AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S LOS ANGELES SPEECH CONTINUED TO RECEIVE SEARCHING EXAMINATION AND FAVORABLE COMMENT FROM EDITORIALISTS AND COLUMNISTS.

"DOMINICAL" FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, PRAISED HIS

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RECOGNITION OF JUSTICE DUE TO PANAMA AND INQUIRED

WHETHER ANTI-TREATY FORCES IN U.S. COULD CONSIDER HIM, AS THEY HAVE OTHERS, AS AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES FOR VOICING THESE OPINIONS (FULL TEXT FBIS/PANAMA PA 080403Y). COLUMNIST LUIS RESTREPO ("MATUTINO", DECEMBER 10) CALLED HIS STATEMENTS "VERY CLEAR...SURELY THEY FORM PART OF A NEW INTERPRETATION BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE OF THE 1903 TREATY". BOTH OF THESE, AND SEVERAL OTHERS, APPROVINGLY NOTED HIS RECOGNITION OF PANAMA'S CAPACITY TO OPERATE THE CANAL; COMPLAINTS ON THIS SCORE HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY ANNOYING TO PANAMA IN THE PAST.

2. ALL LOCAL MEDIA COVERED STATEMENT BY AMB. LINOWITZ THAT NO TREATY COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE SIGNED IN 1976, BUT THIS STATEMENT, WHICH MIGHT HAVE TOUCHED OFF CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM A FEW MONTHS AGO, WAS RECEIVED RELATIVELY QUIETLY. COLUMNIST MARIO AUGUSTO RODRIGUEZ ("EL PANAMA AMERICA" DECEMBER 11), IN A FAIR EXAMPLE OF COMMENT THE LINOWITZ STATEMENT RECEIVED, DEVOTED ONE OF HIS COLUMNS TO ANALYSIS OF IT IN TERMS OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, AND CONCLUDED THAT THE "INEVITABLE PAUSE" WHICH HE FORESAW WOULD PROVIDE AN ADMIRABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER EDUCATION OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON THE FACTS OF THE ISSUE, ALONG LINES OF AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S SPEECH.

3. COVERAGE OF OTHER DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN MILD, AVOIDING UNDUE POLEMICS AND BLANKET PORTRAYAL OF THE UNITED STATES AS THE ADVERSARY. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE U.S. FAVORABLE TO PANAMA HAVE RECEIVED FAVORABLE PLAY. ITEMS COVERED HAVE INCLUDED STATEMENT BY SENATOR GOLDWATER MODIFYING HIS OPPOSITION TO A NEW TREATY, AND AN EXCHANGE OF REMARKS BETWEEN PANAMANIAN TREATY ADVISER JULIO YAO AND CONG. MICHAEL HARRINGTON IN MEXICO CITY IN NOVEMBER (TEXT OF ARTICLE POUCHED ARA/PAN - FIRFER).

4. PRESS ALSO INCLUDED COVERAGE AND COMMENT UPON ANNIVERSARY OF DECEMBER 10-12, 1947 REJECTION OF FILOS-HINES TREATY. PUBLIC COMMEMORATION OF THAT EVENT WAS UNEXCEPTIONABLE; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONLY A REPORTED 250 PEOPLE SHOWED UP AT AN EVENING RALLY WHICH FEATURED UNIVERSITY RECTOR AND TREATY ADVISER ROMULO ESCOBAR AS SPEAKER (ESCOBAR WAS STUDENT LEADER IN 1947 AND PLAYED LEADING ROLE IN DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH CAUSED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO REJECT THE FILOS-HINES TREATY). A PLANNED STUDENT MARCH AND RALLY FAILED TO MATERIALIZED AT ALL. THE GENERAL TENOR OF PRESS TREATMENT THIS YEAR EMPHASIZED NATIONALISM AND POPULAR EXPRESSION THEREOF,

RATHER THAN YANKEE IMPERIALISM PER SE.

5. NEWSPAPERS FOR DECEMBER 14-15 WERE FULL OF COMMENTARY ON LOYALTY TO GENERAL TORRIJOS, ON ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SUPPRESSION OF ATTEMPTED COUP OF DECEMBER 15-16, 1969. AGAIN, DOMINANT THEMES HAVE BEEN NATIONALISM AND SOLIDARITY WITH TORRIJOS, RATHER THAN ANTI-U.S. THETORIC; THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE, OF COURSE, MENTIONED IN THIS CONTEXT, BUT WERE NOT UNDULY STRESSED.

6. COMMENT: SINCE THE PLAY GIVEN TO TORRIJOS' "ULTIMATUM" LATE LAST MONTH, PUBLIC COVERAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS HERE APPEARS TO HAVE ENTERED A HOLDING PATTERN, ESCHEWING ATTEMPTS TO CAST THE U.S. AS THE "HEAVY", AND AVOIDING APPROACHES WHICH WOULD WHIP UP EITHER POPULAR EXPECTATIONS OR POPULAR RESENTMENT. THE GOP APPEARS TO BE HAVING GENERAL SUCCESS IN MANAGING ITS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ATTENTION AND SUPPORT WITHOUT EXCITING HOPES FOR QUICK RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM, AND, IN FACT, EDUCATING ITS PEOPLE TO THE IDEA THAT A TREATY MAY NOT BE SIGNED IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR REASONS NOT REALLY WITHIN PANAMA'S CONTROL. AT THE SAME TIME, MEDIA ATTENTION TO DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY RELATED TO THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AND TO GOP ACTIONS TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE IN ITS RECOVERY WHILE PROTECTING THE CONSUMER, HAS INCREASED. UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS WILL SHORTLY BEGIN THEIR ANNUAL 3-MONTH VACATION, THUS LESSENING THE POTENTIAL VOLATILITY AMONG STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THESE INSTITUTIONS. WHILE IT MUST CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH ITS SIMMERING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THE GOP APPEARS TO HAVE QUIETED ITS DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION TO A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANAGEABLE LEVEL WHICH, BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS, WE CONSIDER IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST UNTIL THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1964 RIOTS ON JANUARY 9. END COMMENT.

JORDEN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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